



**STORIES OF  
THE GREAT WEST**



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Theodore Roosevelt

# STORIES OF THE GREAT WEST

BY  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT

Illustrated



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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

As a youth Theodore Roosevelt was an enthusiastic student of Western history and pioneer types. Later, as ranchman and hunter, he grew to know intimately and to love deeply the rough, free life of the Western plains. Mr. Roosevelt's interest in history probably was inherited, but his fondness for outdoor life grew out of his grateful love for his foster mother—the green earth—who took the delicate youth in her rough, but kindly, embrace and gave him a sound body and a clear vision.

It was during the quiet evenings, and the otherwise idle hours, spent at "Elkhorn," his Dakota ranch, that Theodore Roosevelt penned most of the fascinating pictures of frontier and ranch life that make up this present volume.

"The Backwoodsmen of the Alleghanies" and "Lewis and Clark and the Exploration of the Far West" are from "The Winning of the West," permission to republish here having kindly been granted by G. P. Putnam's Sons. The other stories are from "Hero Tales" and "Ranch Life and the Hunting Trail." Some of these stories have been condensed from the original version for reasons of space.

## THE FORELOPER

The gull shall whistle in his wake, the blind wave break in fire,  
He shall fulfil God's utmost will, unknowing his desire,  
And he shall see old planets pass and alien stars arise,  
And give the gale his reckless sail in shadow of new skies,  
Strong lust of gear shall drive him out and hunger arm his hand  
To wring his food from a desert nude, his foothold from the sand  
His neighbors' smoke shall vex his eyes, their voices break his rest,  
He shall go forth till South is North, sullen and disposessed,  
He shall desire loneliness, and his desire shall bring  
Hard on his heels a thousand wheels, a people and a king  
He shall come back on his own track and by his scarce cool camp,  
There shall he meet the roaring street, the derrick, and the stamp,  
For he must blaze a nation's ways, with hatchet and with brand,  
Till on his last-won wilderness an empire's bulwarks stand

*Kipling*

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**DANIEL BOONE AND  
THE FOUNDING OF KENTUCKY**



# PART I

## STORIES FROM HISTORY

### DANIEL BOONE AND THE FOUNDING OF KENTUCKY

**D**ANIEL BOONE will always occupy a unique place in our history as the arch-type of the hunter and wilderness wanderer. He was a true pioneer, and stood at the head of that class of Indian-fighters, game-hunters, forest-fellers, and backwoods farmers who, generation after generation, pushed westward the border of civilization from the Alleghanies to the Pacific. As he himself said, he was "an instrument ordained of God to settle the wilderness." Born in Pennsylvania, he drifted south into western North Carolina, and settled on what was then the extreme frontier. There he married, built a log cabin, and hunted, chopped trees, and tilled the ground like any other frontiersman. The Alleghany Mountains still marked a boundary beyond which the settlers dared not go; for west of them lay immense reaches of frowning forests, uninhabited save by bands of warlike Indians. Occasionally some venture-

some hunter or trapper penetrated this immense wilderness, and returned with strange stories of what he had seen and done.

In 1769 Boone, excited by these vague and wondrous tales, determined himself to cross the mountains and find out what manner of land it was that lay beyond. With a few chosen companions he set out, making his own trail through the gloomy forest. After weeks of wandering, he at last emerged into the beautiful and fertile country of Kentucky, for which, in after years, the red men and the white strove with such obstinate fury that it grew to be called "the dark and bloody ground." But when Boone first saw it, it was a fair and smiling land of groves and glades and running waters, where the open forest grew tall and beautiful, and where innumerable herds of game grazed, roaming ceaselessly to and fro along the trails they had trodden during countless generations. Kentucky was not owned by any Indian tribe, and was visited only by wandering war-parties and hunting-parties who came from among the savage nations living north of the Ohio or south of the Tennessee.

A roving war-party stumbled upon one of Boone's companions and killed him, and the others then left Boone and journeyed home; but his brother came out to join him, and the two spent



*Early pioneers on the Blue Ridge.*





the winter together. Self-reliant, fearless, and possessed of great bodily strength and hardihood, they cared little for the loneliness. The teeming myriads of game furnished abundant food; the herds of shaggy-maned bison and noble-antlered elk, the bands of deer and the numerous black bear, were all ready for the rifle, and they were tame and easily slain. The wolf and the cougar, too, sometimes fell victims to the prowess of the two hunters.

At times they slept in hollow trees, or in some bush lean-to of their own making; at other times, when they feared Indians, they changed their resting-place every night, and after making a fire would go off a mile or two in the woods to sleep. Surrounded by brute and human foes, they owed their lives to their sleepless vigilance, their keen senses, their eagle eyes, and their resolute hearts.

When the spring came, and the woods were white with the dogwood blossoms, and crimsoned with the red-bud, Boone's brother left him, and Daniel remained for three months alone in the wilderness. The brother soon came back again with a party of hunters; and other parties likewise came in, to wander for months and years through the wilderness; and they wrought huge havoc among the vast herds of game.

In 1771 Boone returned to his home. Two years later he started to lead a party of settlers to the new country; but while passing through the frowning defiles of Cumberland Gap, they were attacked by Indians, and driven back—two of Boone's own sons being slain. In 1775, however, he made another attempt; and this attempt was successful. The Indians attacked the newcomers; but by this time the parties of would-be settlers were sufficiently numerous to hold their own. They beat back the Indians, and built rough little hamlets, surrounded by log stockades, at Boonesborough and Harrodsburg; and the permanent settlement of Kentucky had begun.

The next few years were passed by Boone amid unending Indian conflicts. He was a leader among the settlers, both in peace and in war. At one time he represented them in the House of Burgesses of Virginia; at another time he was a member of the first little Kentucky parliament itself; and he became a colonel of the frontier militia. He tilled the land and he chopped the trees himself; he helped to build the cabins and stockades with his own hands, wielding the long-handled, light-headed frontier ax as skilfully as other frontiersmen. His main business was that of surveyor, for his knowledge of the country, and his ability to travel through

it, in spite of the danger from Indians, created much demand for his services among people who wished to lay off tracts of wild land for their own future use. But whatever he did, and wherever he went, he had to be sleeplessly on the lookout for his Indian foes. When he and his fellows tilled the stump-dotted fields of corn, one or more of the party were always on guard, with weapon at the ready, for fear of lurking savages. When he went to the House of Burgesses he carried his long rifle, and traversed roads not a mile of which was free from the danger of Indian attack. The settlements in the early years depended exclusively upon game for their meat, and Boone was the mightiest of all the hunters, so that upon him devolved the task of keeping his people supplied. He killed many buffaloes, and pickled the buffalo beef for use in winter. He killed great numbers of black bear, and made bacon of them, precisely as if they had been hogs. The common game were deer and elk. At that time none of the hunters of Kentucky would waste a shot on anything so small as a prairie-chicken or wild duck; but they sometimes killed geese and swans when they came south in winter and lit on the rivers. But whenever Boone went into the woods after game, he had perpetually to keep watch lest he himself might be hunted in turn. He

never lay in wait at a game-lick, save with ears strained to hear the approach of some crawling red foe. He never crept up to a turkey he heard calling, without exercising the utmost care to see that it was not an Indian; for one of the favorite devices of the Indians was to imitate the turkey call, and thus allure within range some inexperienced hunter.

Besides this warfare, which went on in the midst of his usual vocations, Boone frequently took the field on set expeditions against the savages. Once when he and a party of other men were making salt at a lick, they were surprised and carried off by the Indians. The old hunter was a prisoner with them for some months, but finally made his escape and came home through the trackless woods as straight as the wild pigeon flies. He was ever on the watch to ward off the Indian inroads, and to follow the war-parties, and try to rescue the prisoners. Once his own daughter, and two other girls who were with her, were carried off by a band of Indians. Boone raised some friends and followed the trail steadily for two days and a night; then they came to where the Indians had killed a buffalo calf and were camped around it. Firing from a little distance, the whites shot two of the Indians, and, rushing in, rescued the girls. On another

occasion, when Boone had gone to visit a salt-lick with his brother, the Indians ambushed them and shot the latter. Boone himself escaped, but the Indians followed him for three miles by the aid of a tracking dog, until Boone turned, shot the dog, and then eluded his pursuers. In company with Simon Kenton and many other noted hunters and wilderness warriors, he once and again took part in expeditions into the Indian country, where they killed the braves and drove off the horses. Twice bands of Indians, accompanied by French, Tory, and British partizans from Detroit, bearing the flag of Great Britain, attacked Boonesborough. In each case Boone and his fellow-settlers beat them off with loss. At the fatal battle of the Blue Licks, in which two hundred of the best riflemen of Kentucky were beaten with terrible slaughter by a great force of Indians from the lakes, Boone commanded the left wing. Leading his men, rifle in hand, he pushed back and overthrew the force against him; but meanwhile the Indians destroyed the right wing and center, and got round in his rear, so that there was nothing left for Boone's men except to flee with all possible speed.

As Kentucky became settled, Boone grew restless and ill at ease. He loved the wilderness; he loved the great forests and the great prairie-

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like glades, and the life in the little lonely cabin, where from the door he could see the deer come out into the clearing at nightfall. The neighborhood of his own kind made him feel cramped and ill at ease. So he moved ever westward with the frontier; and as Kentucky filled up he crossed the Mississippi and settled on the borders of the prairie country of Missouri, where the Spaniards, who ruled the territory, made him an alcalde, or judge. He lived to a great age, and died out on the border, a backwoods hunter to the last.

**BACKWOODSMEN OF THE  
ALLEGHANIES**





## THE BACKWOODSMEN OF THE ALLEGHANIES

1769-1774

### I. WHO THEY WERE AND WHERE THEY SETTLED

**A** LONG the western frontier of the colonies that were so soon to be the United States, among the foothills of the Alleghanies, on the slopes of the wooded mountains, and in the long trough-like valleys that lay between the ranges dwelt a peculiar and characteristically American people.

These frontier folk, the people of the up-country, or back-country, who lived near and among the forest-clad mountains, far away from the long-settled districts of flat coast plain and sluggish tidal river, were known to themselves and to others as backwoodsmen. They all bore a strong likeness to one another in their habits of thought and ways of living, and differed markedly from the people of the older and more civilized communities to the eastward. The western border of our country was then formed by the great barrier-chains of the Alleghanies,

which ran north and south from Pennsylvania through Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas, the trend of the valleys being parallel to the sea-coast, and the mountains rising highest to the southward. It was difficult to cross the ranges from east to west, but it was both easy and natural to follow the valleys between. From Fort Pitt to the high hill-homes of the Cherokees this great tract of wooded and mountainous country possessed nearly the same features and characteristics, differing utterly in physical aspect from the alluvial plains bordering the ocean.

The backwoodsmen were Americans by birth and parentage, and of mixed race; but the dominant strain in their blood was that of the Presbyterian Irish—the Scotch-Irish as they were often called. These Irish representatives of the Covenanters were in the west almost what the Puritans were in the northeast, and more than the Cavaliers were in the south. Mingled with the descendants of many other races, they nevertheless formed the kernel of the distinctively and intensely American stock who were the pioneers of our people in their march westward, the vanguard of the army of fighting settlers, who with ax and rifle won their way from the Alleghanies to the Rio Grande and the Pacific.

The Presbyterian Irish were themselves al-

ready a mixed people. Though mainly descended from Scotch ancestors, many of them were of English, a few of French Huguenot, and quite a number of true old Milesian Irish extraction. They were a truculent and obstinate people, and gloried in the warlike renown of their forefathers, the men who had followed Cromwell, and who had shared in the defence of Derry and in the victories of the Boyne and Aughrim.

They did not begin to come to America in any numbers till after the opening of the eighteenth century; by 1730 they were fairly swarming across the ocean, for the most part in two streams, the larger going to the port of Philadelphia, the smaller to the port of Charleston. Pushing through the long settled lowlands of the seacoast, they at once made their abode at the foot of the mountains, and became the outposts of civilization. From Pennsylvania, whither the great majority had come, they drifted south along the foothills and down the long valleys, till they met their brethren from Charleston who had pushed up into the Carolina back-country. In this land of hills, covered by unbroken forest, they took root and flourished, stretching in a broad belt from north to south, a shield of sinewy men thrust in between the people of the seaboard

and the red warriors of the wilderness. All through this region they were alike; they had as little kinship with the Cavalier as with the Quaker; the west was won by those who have been rightly called the Roundheads of the south, the same men who, before any others, declared for American independence.

That these Irish Presbyterians were a bold and hardy race is proved by their at once pushing past the settled regions, and plunging into the wilderness as the leaders of the white advance. They were the first and last set of immigrants to do this, all others have merely followed in the wake of their predecessors.

These Presbyterian Irish were, however, far from being the only settlers on the border, although more than any others they impressed the stamp of their peculiar character on the pioneer civilization of the west and southwest. Great numbers of immigrants of English descent came among them from the settled districts on the east; and though these later arrivals soon became indistinguishable from the people among whom they settled, yet they certainly sometimes added a tone of their own to backwoods society, giving it here and there a slight dash of what we are accustomed to consider the distinctively southern or cavalier spirit. There was likewise

a large German admixture, not only from the Germans of Pennsylvania, but also from those of the Carolinas. A good many Huguenots likewise came, giving to the backwoods society such families as the Seviers and Lenoirs. The Huguenots, like the Germans, frequently had their names Anglicized. The best known and most often quoted example is that of the Blancpied family, part of whom have become Whitefoots, while the others, living on the coast, have suffered a marvellous sea-change, the name re-appearing as "Blumpy." There were a few Hollanders and even Swedes, from the banks of the Delaware, or perhaps from farther off still.

A single generation, passed under the hard conditions of life in the wilderness, was enough to weld together into one people the representatives of these numerous and widely different races; and the children of the next generation became indistinguishable from one another. Long before the first Continental Congress assembled, the backwoodsmen, whatever their blood, had become Americans, one in speech, thought, and character, clutching firmly the land in which their fathers and grandfathers had lived before them. They had lost all remembrance of Europe and all sympathy with things European; they had become as emphatically products native

to the soil as were the tough and supple hickories out of which they fashioned the handles of their long, light axes. Their grim, harsh, narrow lives were yet strangely fascinating and full of adventurous toil and danger; none but natures as strong, as freedom-loving, and as full of bold defiance as theirs could have endured existence on the terms which these men found pleasurable. Their iron surroundings made a mould which turned out all alike in the same shape. They resembled one another, and they differed from the rest of the world—even the world of America, and infinitely more the world of Europe—in dress, in customs, and in mode of life.

Where their lands abutted on the more settled districts to the eastward, the population was of course thickest, and their peculiarities least. Here and there at such points they built small backwoods burghs or towns, rude, straggling, unkempt villages, with a store or two, a tavern, a small log school-house, and a little church, presided over by a hard-featured Presbyterian preacher, gloomy, earnest, and zealous, probably bigoted and narrow-minded, but nevertheless a great power for good in the community.

However, the backwoodsmen as a class neither built towns nor loved to dwell therein. They were to be seen at their best in the vast, intermin-

able forests that formed their chosen home. They won and kept their lands by force, and ever lived either at war or in dread of war. Hence they settled always in groups of several families each, all banded together for mutual protection. Their red foes were strong and terrible, cunning in council, dreadful in battle, merciless beyond belief in victory. The men of the border did not overcome and dispossess cowards and weaklings; they marched forth to spoil the stout-hearted and to take for a prey the possessions of the men of might. Every acre, every rood of ground which they claimed had to be cleared by the ax and held with the rifle. Not only was the chopping down of the forests the first preliminary to cultivation, but it was also the surest means of subduing the Indians, to whom the unending stretches of choked woodlands were an impenetrable cover behind which to move unseen, a shield in making assaults, and a strong tower of defence in repelling counter-attacks. In the conquest of the west the backwoods ax, shapely, well-poised, with long haft and light head, was a servant hardly standing second even to the rifle; the two were the national weapons of the American backwoodsman, and in their use he has never been excelled.



## II. THEIR HABITATIONS.

When a group of families moved out into the wilderness they built themselves a station or stockade fort, a square palisade of upright logs, loop-holed, with strong blockhouses as bastions at the corners. One side at least was generally formed by the backs of the cabins themselves, all standing in a row; and there was a great door or gate, that could be strongly barred in case of need. Often no iron whatever was employed in any of the buildings. The square inside contained the provision sheds and frequently a strong central blockhouse as well. These forts, of course, could not stand against cannon, and they were always in danger when attacked with fire, but save for this risk of burning they were very effectual defences against men without artillery, and were rarely taken, whether by whites or Indians, except by surprise. Few other buildings have played so important a part in our history as the rough stockade fort of the backwoods.

The families only lived in the fort when there was war with the Indians, and even then not in the winter. At other times they all separated out to their own farms, universally called clear-

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"Their red foes were strong and terrible."



ings, as they were always made by first cutting off the timber. The stumps were left to dot the fields of grain and Indian corn. The corn in especial was the stand-by and invariable resource of the western settler; it was the crop on which he relied to feed his family, and when hunting or on a war trail the parched grains were carried in his leather wallet to serve often as his only food. But he planted orchards and raised melons, potatoes, and many other fruits and vegetables as well; and he had usually a horse or two, cows, and perhaps hogs and sheep, if the wolves and bears did not interfere. If he was poor his cabin was made of unhewn logs, and held but a single room; if well-to-do, the logs were neatly hewed, and besides the large living and eating-room with its huge stone fireplace, there was also a small bedroom and a kitchen, while a ladder led to the loft above, in which the boys slept. The floor was made of puncheons, great slabs of wood hewed carefully out, and the roof of clapboards. Pegs of wood were thrust into the sides of the house, to serve instead of a wardrobe; and buck antlers, thrust into joists, held the ever-ready rifles. The table was a great clapboard set on four wooden legs; there were three-legged stools, and in the better sort of houses old-fash-

ioned rocking-chairs. The couch or bed was warmly covered with blankets, bear-skins, and deer-hides.

These clearings lay far apart from one another in the wilderness. Up to the door-sills of the log-huts stretched the solemn and mysterious forest. There were no openings to break its continuity; nothing but endless leagues on leagues of shadowy, wolf-haunted woodland. The great trees towered aloft till their separate heads were lost in the mass of foliage above, and the rank underbrush choked the spaces between the trunks. On the higher peaks and ridge-crests of the mountains there were straggling birches and pines, hemlocks and balsam firs; elsewhere, oaks, chestnuts, hickories, maples, beeches, walnuts, and great tulip trees grew *side by side* with many other kinds. The sunlight could not penetrate the roofed archway of murmuring leaves; through the gray aisles of the forest men walked always in a kind of mid-day gloaming. Those who had lived in the open plains felt when they came to the back-woods as if their heads were hooded. Save on the border of a lake, from a cliff top, or on a bald knob—that is, a bare hill-shoulder,—they could not anywhere look out for any distance.

All the land was shrouded in one vast forest.

It covered the mountains from crest to river-bed, filled the plains, and stretched in somber and melancholy wastes towards the Mississippi. All that it contained, all that lay hid within it and beyond it, none could tell; men only knew that their boldest hunters, however deeply they had penetrated, had not yet gone through it, that it was the home of the game they followed and the wild beasts that preyed on their flocks, and that deep in its tangled depths lurked their red foes, hawk-eyed and wolf-hearted.

### III. THEIR DAILY LIFE AND THEIR DRESS.

Backwoods society was simple, and the duties and rights of each member of the family were plain and clear. The man was the armed protector and provider, the bread-winner; the woman was the housewife and mother. They married young and their families were large, for they were strong and healthy, and their success in life depended on their own stout arms and willing hearts. There was everywhere great equality of conditions. Land was plenty and all else scarce; so courage, thrift, and industry were sure of their reward. All had small farms, with the few stock necessary to cultivate them; the farms being generally placed in the hollows, the divi-

sion lines between them, if they were close together, being the tops of the ridges and the water-courses, especially the former. The buildings of each farm were usually at its lowest point, as if in the center of an amphitheater. Each was on an average of about 400 acres, but sometimes more. Tracts of low, swampy grounds, possibly some miles from the cabin, were cleared for meadows, the fodder being stacked, and hauled home in winter.

Each backwoodsman was not only a small farmer but also a hunter; for his wife and children depended for their meat upon the venison and bear's flesh procured by his rifle. The people were restless and always on the move. After being a little while in a place, some of the men would settle down permanently, while others would again drift off, farming and hunting alternately to support their families. The backwoodsman's dress was in great part borrowed from his Indian foes. He wore a fur cap or felt hat, moccasins, and either loose, thin trousers, or else simply leggings of buckskin or elk-hide, and the Indian breech-clout. He was always clad in the fringed hunting-shirt, of homespun or buckskin, the most picturesque and distinctively national dress ever worn in America. It was a loose smock or tunic, reaching nearly



"The backwoodsman's dress was borrowed from his  
Indian foes"





to the knees, and held in at the waist by a broad belt, from which hung the tomahawk and scalping-knife. His weapon was the long, small-bore, flint-lock rifle, clumsy, and ill-balanced, but exceedingly accurate. It was very heavy, and when upright, reached to the chin of a tall man; for the barrel of thick, soft iron, was four feet in length, while the stock was short, and the butt scooped out. Sometimes it was plain, sometimes ornamented. It was generally bored out—or, as the expression then was, “sawed out”—to carry a ball of seventy, more rarely of thirty or forty, to the pound; and was usually of backwoods manufacture. The marksman almost always fired from a rest, and rarely at a very long range; and the shooting was marvelously accurate.

In the backwoods there was very little money; barter was the common form of exchange, and peltries were often used as a circulating medium, a beaver, otter, fisher, dressed buckskin or large bear-skin being reckoned as equal to two foxes or wildcats, four coons, or eight minks. A young man inherited nothing from his father but his strong frame and eager heart; but before him lay a whole continent wherein to pitch his farm, and he felt ready to marry as soon as he became of age, even though he had nothing but his

clothes, his horses, his ax and his rifle. If a girl was well off, and had been careful and industrious, she might herself bring a dowry, of a cow and a calf, a brood mare, a bed well stocked with blankets, and a chest containing her clothes—the latter not very elaborate, for a woman's dress consisted of a hat or poke bonnet, a "bed gown," perhaps a jacket, and a linsey petticoat, while her feet were thrust into coarse shoepacks or moccasins. Fine clothes were rare; a suit of such cost more than 200 acres of good land.

The first lesson the backwoodsmen learned was the necessity of self-help; the next, that such a community could only thrive if all joined in helping one another. Log-rollings, house-raising, house-warmings, corn-shuckings, quiltings, and the like were occasions when all the neighbors came together to do what the family itself could hardly accomplish alone. Every such meeting was the occasion of a frolic and dance for the young people, and the host exerting his utmost power to spread the table with backwoods delicacies—bear-meat and venison, vegetables from the "truck patch," where squashes, melons, beans, and the like were grown, wild fruits, bowls of milk, and apple pies, which were the acknowledged standard of luxury. At the better houses there was metheglin or small beer, cider,

cheese, and biscuits. Tea was so little known that many of the backwoods people were not aware it was a beverage and at first attempted to eat the leaves with salt or butter.

The young men prided themselves on their bodily strength, and were always eager to contend against one another in athletic games, such as wrestling, racing, jumping, and lifting flour-barrels; and they also sought distinction in vying with one another at their work. Sometimes they strove against one another singly, sometimes they divided into parties, each bending all its energies to be first in shucking a given heap of corn or cutting (with sickles) an allotted patch of wheat. Among the men the bravos or bullies often were dandies also in the backwoods fashions, wearing their hair long and delighting in the rude finery of hunting-shirts embroidered with porcupine quills; they were loud, boastful, and profane, given to coarsely bantering one another. Brutally savage fights were frequent; the combatants, who were surrounded by rings of interested spectators, striking, kicking, biting, and gouging. The fall of one of them did not stop the fight, for the man who was down was maltreated without mercy until he called "enough." The victor always bragged savagely of his prowess, often leaping on a stump, crow-

ing and flapping his arms. This last was a thoroughly American touch; but otherwise one of these contests was less a boxing match than a kind of backwoods *pancratium*, no less revolting than its ancient prototype of Olympic fame. Yet, if the uncouth borderers were as brutal as the highly polished Greeks, they were more manly; defeat was not necessarily considered disgrace, a man often fighting when he was certain to be beaten, while the onlookers neither hooted nor pelted the conquered. We first hear of the noted scout and Indian fighter, Simon Kenton, as leaving a rival for dead after one of these ferocious duels, and fleeing from his home in terror of the punishment that might follow the deed. Such fights were specially frequent when the backwoodsmen went into the little frontier towns to see horse races or fairs.

A wedding was always a time of festival. If there was a church anywhere near, the bride rode thither on horseback behind her father, and after the service her pillion was shifted to the bridegroom's steed. If, as generally happened, there was no church, the groom and his friends, all armed, rode to the house of the bride's father, the men racing recklessly along the narrow bridle-paths, for there were few roads or wheeled vehicles in the backwoods. At the bride's house

the ceremony was performed, and then a huge dinner was eaten; after which the fiddling and dancing began, and were continued all the afternoon, and most of the night as well. The fun was hearty and coarse, and the toasts always included one to the young couple, with the wish that they might have many big children; for as long as they could remember the backwoodsmen had lived at war, while looking ahead they saw no chance of its ever stopping, and so each son was regarded as a future warrior, a help to the whole community. The neighbors all joined again in chopping and rolling the logs for the young couple's future house, then in raising the house itself, and finally in feasting and dancing at the house-warming.

Funerals were simple, the dead body being carried to the grave in a coffin slung on poles and borne by four men.

There was not much schooling, and few boys or girls learned much more than reading, writing, and ciphering up to the rule of three. Where the school-houses existed they were only dark, mean log-huts, and if in the southern colonies, were generally placed in the so-called "old fields," or abandoned farms grown up with pines. The schoolmaster boarded about with the families; his learning was rarely great, nor was his

discipline good, in spite of the frequency and severity of the canings. The price for such tuition was at the rate of twenty shillings a year, in Pennsylvania currency.

Each family did every thing that could be done for itself. The father and sons worked with ax, hoe, and sickle. Almost every house contained a loom, and almost every woman was a weaver. Linsey-woolsey, made from flax grown near the cabin, and of wool from the backs of the few sheep, was the warmest and most substantial cloth; and when the flax crop failed and the flocks were destroyed by wolves, the children had but scanty covering to hide their nakedness. The man tanned the buckskin, the woman was tailor and shoemaker, and made the deer-skin sifters to be used instead of bolting-cloths. There were a few pewter spoons in use; but the table furniture consisted mainly of hand-made trenchers, platters, noggins, and bowls. The cradle was of peeled hickory bark. Plow-shares had to be imported, but harrows and sleds were made without difficulty; and the cooper work was well done. Chaff beds were thrown on the floor of the loft, if the house-owner was well off. Each cabin had a hand-mill and a hominy block; the last was borrowed from the Indians, and was only a large block of wood, with a hole

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Pack-horse men repelling an attack by Indians.





burned in the top, as a mortar, where the pestle was worked. If there were any sugar maples accessible, they were tapped every year.

But some articles, especially salt and iron, could not be produced in the backwoods. In order to get them each family collected during the year all the furs possible, these being valuable and yet easily carried on pack-horses, the sole means of transport. Then, after seeding time, in the fall, the people of a neighborhood ordinarily joined in sending down a train of peltry-laden pack-horses to some large sea-coast or tidal-river trading town, where their burdens were bartered for the needed iron and salt. The unshod horses all had bells hung round their neck; the clappers were stopped during the day, but when the train was halted for the night, and the horses were hobbled and turned loose, the bells were once more unstopped. Several men accompanied each little caravan, and sometimes they drove with them steers and hogs to sell on the sea-coast. A bushel of alum salt was worth a good cow and calf, and as each of the poorly fed, undersized pack animals could carry but two bushels, the mountaineers prized it greatly, and instead of salting or pickling their venison, they jerked it, by drying it in the sun or smoking it over a fire.

## IV. THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

The life of the backwoodsmen was one long struggle. The forest had to be felled, droughts, deep snows, freshets, cloudbursts, forest fires, and all the other dangers of a wilderness life faced. Swarms of deer-flies, mosquitoes, and midges rendered life a torment in the weeks of hot weather. Rattlesnakes and copperheads were very plentiful, and the former especially, constant sources of danger and death. Wolves and bears were incessant and inveterate foes of the live stock, and the cougar or panther occasionally attacked man as well. More terrible still, the wolves sometimes went mad, and the men who then encountered them were almost certain to be bitten and to die of hydrophobia.

Every true backwoodsman was a hunter. Wild turkeys were plentiful. The pigeons at times filled the woods with clouds that hid the sun and broke down the branches on their roosting grounds as if a whirlwind had passed. The black and gray squirrels swarmed, devastating the corn-fields, and at times gathering in immense companies and migrating across mountain and river. The hunters' ordinary game was the deer, and after that the bear; the elk was already growing uncommon. No form of labor is

harder than the chase, and none is so fascinating nor so excellent as a training-school for war. The successful still-hunter of necessity possessed skill in hiding and in creeping noiselessly upon the wary quarry, as well as in imitating the notes and calls of the different beasts and birds; skill in the use of the rifle and in throwing the tomahawk he already had; and he perforce acquired keenness of eye, thorough acquaintance with woodcraft, and the power of standing the severest strains of fatigue, hardship and exposure. He lived out in the woods for many months with no food but meat, and no shelter whatever, unless he made a lean-to of brush or crawled into a hollow sycamore.

Such training stood the frontier folk in good stead when they were pitted against the Indians; without it they could not even have held their own, and the white advance would have been absolutely checked. Our frontiers were pushed westward by the warlike skill and adventurous personal prowess of the individual settlers; regular armies by themselves could have done little. For one square mile the regular armies added to our domain, the settlers added ten,—a hundred would probably be nearer the truth. A race of peaceful, unwarlike farmers would have been helpless before such foes as the red Indians, and

no auxiliary military force would have protected them or enabled them to move westward. Colonists fresh from the old world, no matter how thrifty, steady-going, and industrious, could not hold their own on the frontier; they had to settle where they were protected from the Indians by a living barrier of bold and self-reliant American borderers. The west would never have been settled save for the fierce courage and the eager desire to brave danger so characteristic of the stalwart backwoodsmen.

These armed hunters, woodchoppers, and farmers were their own soldiers. They built and manned their own forts; they did their own fighting under their own commanders. There were no regiments of regular troops along the frontier. In the event of an Indian inroad each borderer had to defend himself until there was time for them all to gather together to repel or avenge it. Every man was accustomed to the use of arms from his childhood; when a boy was twelve years old he was given a rifle and made a fort-soldier, with a loophole where he was to stand if the station was attacked. The war was never-ending, for even the times of so-called peace were broken by forays and murders; a man might grow from babyhood to middle age on the border, and yet never remember a year in which

some one of his neighbors did not fall a victim to the Indians.

There was everywhere a rude military organization, which included all the able-bodied men of the community. Every settlement had its colonels and captains; but these officers, both in their training and in the authority they exercised, corresponded much more nearly to Indian chiefs than to the regular army men whose titles they bore. They had no means whatever of enforcing their orders, and their tumultuous and disorderly levies of sinewy riflemen were hardly as well disciplined as the Indians themselves. The superior officer could advise, entreat, lead, and influence his men, but he could not command them, or, if he did, the men obeyed him only just so far as it suited them. If an officer planned a scout or campaign, those who thought proper accompanied him, and the others stayed at home, and even those who went out came back if the fit seized them, or perchance followed the lead of an insubordinate junior officer whom they liked better than they did his superior. There was no compulsion to perform military duties beyond dread of being disgraced in the eyes of the neighbors, and there was no pecuniary reward for performing them; nevertheless, the moral sentiment of a backwoods community was too robust to tol-

erate habitual remissness in military affairs, and the coward and laggard were treated with utter scorn, and were generally in the end either laughed out, or "hated out," of the neighborhood, or else got rid of in a still more summary manner. Among a people naturally brave and reckless, this public opinion acted fairly effectively, and there was generally but little shrinking from military service.

A backwoods levy was formidable because of the high average courage and prowess of the individuals composing it; it was on its own ground much more effective than a like force of regular soldiers, but of course it could not be trusted on a long campaign. The backwoodsmen used their rifles better than the Indians, and also stood punishment better, but they never matched them in surprises nor in skill in taking advantage of cover, and very rarely equaled their discipline in the battle itself. After all, the pioneer was primarily a husbandman; the time spent in chopping trees and tilling the soil his foe spent in preparing for or practising forest warfare, and so the former, thanks to the exercise of the very qualities which in the end gave him the possession of the soil, could not, as a rule, hope to rival his antagonist in the actual conflict itself. When large bodies of the red men and white

borderers were pitted against each other, the former were if anything the more likely to have the advantage. But the whites soon copied from the Indians their system of individual and private warfare, and they probably caused their foes far more damage and loss in this way than in the large expeditions. Many noted border scouts and Indian fighters—such men as Boone, Kenton, Wetzel, Brady, McCulloch, Mansker—grew to overmatch their Indian foes at their own game, and held themselves above the most renowned warriors. But these men carried the spirit of defiant self-reliance to such an extreme that their best work was always done when they were alone or in small parties of but four or five. They made long forays after scalps and horses, going a wonderful distance, enduring extreme hardship, risking the most terrible of deaths, and harrying the hostile tribes into a madness of terror and revengeful hatred.

#### V. THE LAW OF THE LAND.

As it was in military matters, so it was with the administration of justice by the frontiersmen; they had few courts, and knew but little law, and yet they contrived to preserve order and morality with rough effectiveness, by combining



to frown down on the grosser misdeeds, and to punish the more flagrant misdoers. Perhaps the spirit in which they acted can be best shown by the recital of an incident in the career of the three McAfee brothers, who were among the pioneer hunters of Kentucky. Previous to trying to move their families out to the new country, they made a cache of clothing, implements, and provisions, which in their absence was broken into and plundered. They caught the thief, "a little diminutive, red-headed white man," a runaway convict servant from one of the tide-water counties of Virginia. In the first impulse of anger at finding that he was the criminal, one of the McAfees rushed at him to kill him with his tomahawk; but the weapon turned, the man was only knocked down, and his assailant's gusty anger subsided as quickly as it had risen, giving way to a desire to do stern but fair justice. So the three captors formed themselves into a court, examined into the case, heard the man in his own defence, and after due consultation decided that "according to their opinion of the laws he had forfeited his life, and ought to be hung"; but none of them were willing to execute the sentence in cold blood, and they ended by taking their prisoner back to his master.

The incident was characteristic in more than

one way. The prompt desire of the backwoodsman to avenge his own wrong; his momentary furious anger, speedily quelled and replaced by a dogged determination to be fair but to exact full retribution; the acting entirely without regard to legal forms or legal officials, but yet in a spirit which spoke well for the doer's determination to uphold the essentials that make honest men law-abiding; together with the good faith of the whole proceeding, and the amusing ignorance that it would have been in the least unlawful to execute their own rather harsh sentence—all these were typical frontier traits.

The McAfees themselves and the escaped convict servant whom they captured typify the two prominent classes of the backwoods people. The frontier, in spite of the outward uniformity of means and manners, is preëminently the place of sharp contrasts. The two extremes of society, the strongest, best, and most adventurous, and the weakest, most shiftless, and vicious, are those which seem naturally to drift to the border. Most of the men who came to the backwoods to hew out homes and rear families were stern, manly, and honest; but there was also a large influx of people drawn from the worst immigrants that perhaps ever were brought to America—the mass of convict servants, redemptioners, and the

like, who formed such an excessively undesirable substratum to the otherwise excellent population of the tide-water regions in Virginia and the Carolinas. Many of the southern crackers or poor whites spring from this class, which also in the backwoods gave birth to generations of violent and hardened criminals, and to an even greater number of shiftless, lazy, cowardly cumberers of the earth's surface. They had in many places a permanently bad effect upon the tone of the whole community.

In the backwoods the lawless led lives of abandoned wickedness; they hated good for good's sake, and did their utmost to destroy it. Where the bad element was large, gangs of horse thieves, highwaymen, and other criminals often united with the uncontrollable young men of vicious tastes who were given to gambling, fighting, and the like. They then formed half-secret organizations, often of great extent and with wide ramifications; and if they could control a community they established a reign of terror, driving out both ministers and magistrates, and killing without scruple those who interfered with them. The good men in such a case banded themselves together as regulators and put down the wicked with ruthless severity, by the exercise

of lynch law, shooting and hanging the worst off-hand.

Jails were scarce in the wilderness, and often were entirely wanting in a district, which, indeed, was quite likely to lack legal officers also. If punishment was inflicted at all it was apt to be severe, and took the form of death or whipping. An impromptu jury of neighbors decided with a rough and ready sense of fair play and justice what punishment the crime demanded, and then saw to the execution of their own decree. Whipping was the usual reward of theft. Occasionally torture was resorted to, but not often; but to their honor be it said, the backwoodsmen were horrified at the treatment accorded both to black slaves and to white convict servants in the lowlands.

They were superstitious, of course, believing in witchcraft, and signs and omens; and it may be noted that their superstition showed a singular mixture of old-world survivals and of practices borrowed from the savages or evolved by the very force of their strange surroundings. At the bottom they were deeply religious in their tendencies; and although ministers and meeting-houses were rare, yet the backwoods cabins often contained Bibles, and the mothers used to instil

into the minds of their children reverence for Sunday, while many even of the hunters refused to hunt on that day. Those of them who knew the right honestly tried to live up to it, in spite of the manifold temptations to backsliding offered by their lives of hard and fierce contention. But Calvinism, though more congenial to them than Episcopacy, and infinitely more so than Catholicism, was too cold for the fiery hearts of the borderers; they were not stirred to the depths of their natures till other creeds, and, above all, Methodism, worked their way to the wilderness.

Thus the backwoodsmen lived on the clearings they had hewed out of the everlasting forest; a grim, stern people, strong and simple, powerful for good and evil, swayed by gusts of stormy passion, the love of freedom rooted in their very hearts' core. Their lives were harsh and narrow; they gained their bread by their blood and sweat, in the unending struggle with the wild ruggedness of nature. They suffered terrible injuries at the hands of the red men, and on their foes they waged a terrible warfare in return. They were relentless, revengeful, suspicious, knowing neither ruth nor pity; they were also upright, resolute, and fearless, loyal to their

friends, and devoted to their country. In spite of their many failings, they were of all men the best fitted to conquer the wilderness and hold it against all comers.



**GEORGE ROGERS CLARK AND THE  
CONQUEST OF THE NORTHWEST**





## GEORGE ROGERS CLARK AND THE CONQUEST OF THE NORTHWEST

**I**N 1776, when independence was declared, the United States included only the thirteen original States on the sea-board. With the exception of a few hunters there were no white men west of the Alleghany Mountains, and there was not even an American hunter in the great country out of which we have since made the States of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Wisconsin. All this region north of the Ohio River then formed a part of the Province of Quebec. It was a wilderness of forests and prairies, teeming with game, and inhabited by many warlike tribes of Indians.

Here and there through it were dotted quaint little towns of French Creoles, the most important being Detroit, Vincennes on the Wabash, and Kaskaskia and Cahokia on the Illinois. These French villages were ruled by British officers commanding small bodies of regular soldiers or Tory rangers and Creole partizans. The towns were completely in the power of the Brit-

and the Creole militia taken together outnumbered Clark's force, and they were in close alliance with the Indians roundabout. Clark was anxious to take the town by surprise and avoid bloodshed, as he believed he could win over the Creoles to the American side. Marching cautiously by night and generally hiding by day, he came to the outskirts of the little village on the evening of July 4, and lay in the woods near by until after nightfall.

Fortune favored him. That evening the officers of the garrison had given a great ball to the mirth-loving Creoles, and almost the entire population of the village had gathered in the fort, where the dance was held. While the revelry was at its height, Clark and his tall backwoodsmen, treading silently through the darkness, came into the town, surprised the sentries, and surrounded the fort without causing any alarm.

All the British and French capable of bearing arms were gathered in the fort to take part in or look on at the merrymaking. When his men were posted Clark walked boldly forward through the open door, and, leaning against the wall, looked at the dancers as they whirled around in the light of the flaring torches. For some moments no one noticed him. Then an Indian who had been lying with his chin on his hand,

looking carefully over the gaunt figure of the stranger, sprang to his feet and uttered the wild war-whoop. Immediately the dancing ceased and the men ran to and fro in confusion; but Clark, stepping forward, bade them be at their ease, but to remember that henceforth they danced under the flag of the United States, and not under that of Great Britain.

The surprise was complete and no resistance was attempted. For twenty-four hours the Creoles were in abject terror. Then Clark summoned their chief men together and explained that he came as their ally and not as their foe, and that if they would join with him they should be citizens of the American republic and treated in all respects on an equality with their comrades. The Creoles, caring little for the British, and rather fickle of nature, accepted the proposition with joy and with the most enthusiastic loyalty toward Clark. Not only that, but sending messengers to their kinsmen on the Wabash, they persuaded the people of Vincennes likewise to cast off their allegiance to the British king and to hoist the American flag.

So far, Clark had conquered with greater ease than he had dared to hope. But when the news reached the British governor, Hamilton, at Detroit, he at once prepared to reconquer the land.

He had much greater forces at his command than Clark had; and in the fall of that year he came down to Vincennes by stream and portage, in a great fleet of canoes bearing five hundred fighting men—British regulars, French partizans and Indians. The Vincennes Creoles refused to fight against the British, and the American officer who had been sent thither by Clark had no alternative but to surrender.

If Hamilton had then pushed on and struck Clark in Illinois, having more than treble Clark's force, he could hardly have failed to win the victory; but the season was late and the journey so difficult that he did not believe it could be taken. Accordingly he disbanded the Indians and sent some of his troops back to Detroit, announcing that when spring came he would march against Clark in Illinois.

If Clark in turn had awaited the blow he would have surely met defeat; but he was a greater man than his antagonist, and he did what the other deemed impossible.

Finding that Hamilton had sent home some of his troops and dispersed all his Indians, Clark realized that his chance was to strike before Hamilton's soldiers assembled again in the spring. Accordingly he gathered together the pick of his men, together with a few Creoles, one hundred



"All day long the troops waded in icy water "



and seventy all told, and set out for Vincennes. At first the journey was easy enough, for they passed across the snowy Illinois prairies, broken by great reaches of lofty woods. They killed elk, buffalo and deer for food, there being no difficulty in getting all they wanted to eat; and at night they built huge fires by which to sleep, and feasted "like Indian war-dancers," as Clark said in his report.

But when, in the middle of February, they reached the drowned lands of the Wabash, where the ice had just broken up and everything was flooded, the difficulties seemed almost insuperable and the march became painful and laborious to a degree. All day long the troops waded in the icy water and at night they could with difficulty find some little hillock on which to sleep. Only Clark's indomitable courage and cheerfulness kept the party in heart and enabled them to persevere. However, persevere they did, and at last, on February 28, they came in sight of the town of Vincennes. They captured a Creole who was out shooting ducks, and from him learned that their approach was utterly unsuspected and that there were many Indians in town.

Clark was now in some doubt as to how to make his fight. The British regulars dwelt in a



small fort at one end of the town, where they had two light guns; but Clark feared lest if he made a sudden night attack the townspeople and Indians would from sheer fright turn against him. He accordingly arranged, just before he himself marched in, to send in the captured duck-hunter, conveying a warning to the Indians and the Creoles that he was about to attack the town, but that his only quarrel was with the British, and that if the other inhabitants would stay in their own homes they would not be molested.

Sending the duck-hunter ahead, Clark took up his march and entered the town just after night-fall. The news conveyed by the released hunter astounded the townspeople and they talked it over eagerly and were in doubt what to do. The Indians, not knowing how great might be the force that would assail the town, at once took refuge in the neighboring woods, while the Creoles retired to their own houses. The British knew nothing of what had happened until the Americans had actually entered the streets of the little village. Rushing forward, Clark's men soon penned the regulars within their fort, where they kept them surrounded all night. The next day a party of Indian warriors, who in the British interest had been ravaging the settlements of Kentucky, arrived and entered the town, igno-

rant that the Americans had captured it. Marching boldly forward to the fort, they suddenly found it beleaguered, and before they could flee they were seized by the backwoodsmen. In their belts they carried the scalps of the slain settlers. The savages were taken red-handed and the American frontiersmen were in no mood to show mercy. All the Indians were tomahawked in sight of the fort.

For some time the British defended themselves well; but at length their guns were disabled, all of the gunners being picked off by the backwoods marksmen, and finally the garrison dared not so much as appear at a port-hole, so deadly was the fire from the long rifles. Under such circumstances Hamilton was forced to surrender.

No attempt was afterward made to molest the Americans in the land they had won, and upon the conclusion of peace the Northwest, which had been conquered by Clark, became part of the United States.



**LEWIS AND CLARK AND THE EX-  
PLORATION OF THE FAR WEST**



# LEWIS AND CLARK AND THE EXPLORATION OF THE FAR WEST

## I. PURPOSE OF THE EXPLORATION.

**T**HE Far West, the West beyond the Mississippi, had been thrust on Jefferson, and given to the nation, by the rapid growth of the Old West, the West that lay between the Alleghanies and the Mississippi. The actual title to the new territory had been acquired by the United States Government, acting for the whole nation. It remained to explore the territory thus newly added to the national domain. The Government did not yet know exactly what it had acquired, for the land was not only unmapped, but unexplored. Nobody could tell what were the boundary lines which divided it from British America on the north and Mexico on the south, for nobody knew much of the country through which these lines ran; of most of it, indeed, nobody knew anything. On the new maps the country now showed as part of the United States; but the Indians who alone inhabited it were as

little affected by the transfer as was the game they hunted.

Beyond the Mississippi all that was really well known was the territory in the immediate neighborhood of the little French villages near the mouth of the Missouri. The Creole traders of these villages, and an occasional venturesome American, had gone up the Mississippi to the country of the Sioux and the Mandans, where they had trapped and hunted and traded for furs with the Indians. At the northernmost points that they reached they occasionally encountered traders who had traveled south or southwesterly from the wintry regions where the British fur companies reigned supreme. The headwaters of the Missouri were absolutely unknown; nobody had penetrated the great plains, the vast seas of grass through which the Platte, the Little Missouri and the Yellowstone ran. What lay beyond them and between them and the Pacific was not even guessed at. The Rocky Mountains were not known to exist, so far as the territory newly acquired by the United States was concerned, although under the name of "Stonies" their northern extensions in British America were already down on some maps.

The work of exploring these new lands fell, not to the wild hunters and trappers, such as

those who had first explored Kentucky and Tennessee, but to officers of the United States army, leading parties of United States soldiers, in pursuance of the command of the Government or of its representatives. The earliest and most important expeditions of Americans into the unknown country which the nation had just purchased were led by young officers of the regular army.

The first of these expeditions was planned by Jefferson himself and authorized by Congress. Nominally its purpose was in part to find out the most advantageous places for the establishment of trading stations with the Indian tribes over which our Government had acquired the titular suzerainty; but in reality it was purely a voyage of exploration, planned with intent to ascend the Missouri to its head, and thence to cross the continent to the Pacific. The explorers were carefully instructed to report upon the geography, physical characteristics and zoology of the region traversed, as well as upon its wild human denizens.

The two officers chosen to carry through the work belonged to families already honorably distinguished for service on the Western border. One was Captain Meriwether Lewis, representatives of whose family had served so prominently



in Dunmore's war; the other was Lieutenant (by courtesy Captain) William Clark, a younger brother of George Rogers Clark. Clark had served with credit through Wayne's campaigns, and had taken part in the victory of the Fallen Timbers. Lewis had seen his first service when he enlisted as a private in the forces which were marshalled to put down the whisky insurrection. Later he served under Clark in Wayne's army. He had also been President Jefferson's private secretary.

## II. START OF THE EXPEDITION.

The young officers started on their trip accompanied by twenty-seven men who intended to make the whole journey. Of this number, one, the interpreter and incidentally the best hunter of the party, was a half-breed; two were French voyageurs; one was a negro servant of Clark; nine were volunteers from Kentucky; and fourteen were regular soldiers. All, however, except the black slave, were enlisted in the army before starting, so that they might be kept under regular discipline. In addition to these twenty-seven men there were seven soldiers and nine voyageurs who started only to go to the Mandan villages on the Missouri, where the party intended to

spend the first winter. They embarked in three large boats, abundantly supplied with arms, powder and lead, clothing, gifts for the Indians, and provisions.

The starting point was St. Louis, which had only just been surrendered to the United States Government by the Spaniards, without any French intermediaries. The explorers pushed off in May, 1804, and soon began stemming the strong current of the muddy Missouri, to whose unknown sources they intended to ascend. For two or three weeks they occasionally passed farms and hamlets. The most important of the little towns was St. Charles, where the people were all Creoles; the explorers in their journal commented upon the good temper and vivacity of these *habitants*, but dwelt on the shiftlessness they displayed and their readiness to sink back towards savagery, although they were brave and hardy enough. The next most considerable town was peopled mainly by Americans, who had already begun to make numerous settlements in the new land. The last squalid little village they passed claimed as one of its occasional residents old Daniel Boone himself.

After leaving the final straggling log cabins of the settled country, the explorers, with sails and paddles, made their way through what is now

the State of Missouri. They lived well, for their hunters killed many deer and wild turkey and some black bear and beaver, and there was an abundance of breeding water fowl. Here and there were Indian encampments, but not many, for the tribes had gone westward to the great plains of what is now Kansas to hunt the buffalo. Already buffalo and elk were scarce in Missouri, and the party did not begin to find them in any numbers until they reached the neighborhood of what is now southern Nebraska.

From there onwards the game was found in vast herds and the party began to come upon those characteristic animals of the Great Plains which were as yet unknown to white men of our race. The buffalo and the elk had once ranged eastward to the Alleghanies and were familiar to early wanderers through the wooded wilderness; but in no part of the east had their numbers ever remotely approached the astounding multitudes in which they were found on the Great Plains. The curious prong-buck or prong-horned antelope was unknown east of the Great Plains. So was the blacktail, or mule deer, which our adventurers began to find here and there as they gradually worked their way north-westward. So were the coyotes, whose uncanny wailing after nightfall varied the sinister hay-



An old-time mountain man with his ponies



ing of the gray wolves; so were many of the smaller animals, notably the prairie dogs, whose populous villages awakened the lively curiosity of Lewis and Clark.

In their note-books the two captains faithfully described all these new animals and all the strange sights they saw. Few explorers who did and saw so much that was absolutely new have written of their deeds with such quiet absence of boastfulness, and have drawn their descriptions with such complete freedom from exaggeration.

Moreover, what was of even greater importance, the two young captains possessed in perfection the qualities necessary to pilot such an expedition through unknown lands and among savage tribes. They kept good discipline among the men; they never hesitated to punish severely any wrong-doer; but they were never over-severe; and as they did their full part of the work and ran all the risks and suffered all the hardship exactly like the other members of the expedition, they were regarded by their followers with devoted affection and were served with loyalty and cheerfulness.

### III. AMONG THE INDIANS.

In dealing with the Indians they showed good humor and common-sense mingled with ceaseless

vigilance and unbending resolution. Only men who possessed their tact and daring could have piloted the party safely among the warlike tribes they encountered. Any act of weakness or timidity on the one hand, or of harshness or cruelty on the other, would have been fatal to the expedition; but they were careful to treat the tribes well and to try to secure their good-will, while at the same time putting an immediate stop to any insolence or outrage. Several times they were in much jeopardy when they reached the land of the Dakotas and passed among the various ferocious tribes whom they knew, and whom we yet know, as the Sioux. The French traders frequently came up river to the country of the Sioux, who often maltreated and robbed them. In consequence Lewis and Clark found that the Sioux were inclined to regard the whites as people whom they could safely oppress. The resolute bearing of the newcomers soon taught them that they were in error, and after a little hesitation the various tribes in each case became friendly.

With all the Indian tribes the two explorers held councils and distributed presents, especially medals, among the head chiefs and warriors, informing them of the transfer of the territory from Spain to the United States and warning

them that henceforth they must look to the President as their protector and not to the King, whether of England or of Spain. The Indians all professed much satisfaction at the change, which of course they did not in the least understand, and for which they cared nothing. Their easy acquiescence gave much groundless satisfaction to Lewis and Clark, who further, in a spirit of philanthropy, strove to make each tribe swear peace with its neighbors. After some hesitation the tribe usually consented to this also, and the explorers, greatly gratified, passed on. It is needless to say that as soon as they had disappeared the tribes promptly went to war again; and that in reality the Indians had only the vaguest idea as to what was meant by the ceremonies and the hoisting of the American flag. The wonder is that Clark, who had already had some experience with Indians, should have supposed that the councils, advice and proclamations would have any effect of the kind hoped for upon these wild savages.

As the fall weather grew cold the party reached the Mandan village, where they halted and went into camp for the winter, building huts and a stout stockade, which they christened Fort Mandan. Traders from St. Louis and also British traders from the North reached these vil-



lages, and the inhabitants were accustomed to dealing with the whites. Throughout the winter the party was well treated by the Indians, and kept in good health and spirits; the journals frequently mention the fondness the men showed for dancing, although without partners of the opposite sex. Yet they suffered much from the extreme cold, and at times from hunger, for it was hard to hunt in the winter weather, and the game was thin and poor. Generally game could be killed in a day's hunt from the fort; but occasionally small parties of hunters went off for a trip of several days, and returned laden with meat; in one case they killed thirty-two deer, eleven elk and a buffalo; in another forty deer, sixteen elk and three buffalo; thirty-six deer and fourteen elk, etc., etc. The buffalo remaining in the neighborhood during the winter were mostly old bulls, too lean to eat; and as the snows came on most of the antelope left for the rugged country farther west, swimming the Missouri in great bands. Before the bitter weather began the explorers were much interested by the methods of the Indians in hunting, especially when they surrounded and slaughtered bands of buffalo on horseback; and by the curious pens, with huge V-shaped wings, into which they drove antelope.

In the spring of 1805, Lewis and Clark again started westward, first sending down-stream ten of their companions, to carry home the notes of their trip so far, and a few valuable specimens. The party that started westward numbered thirty-two adults, all told; for one sergeant had died and two or three persons had volunteered at the Mandan villages, including a rather worthless French "squaw-man," with an intelligent Indian wife, whose baby was but a few weeks old.

From this point onwards, when they began to travel west instead of north, the explorers were in a country where no white man had ever trod. It was not the first time the continent had been crossed. The Spaniards had crossed and recrossed it, for two centuries, farther south. In British America Mackenzie had already penetrated to the Pacific, while Hearne had made a far more noteworthy and difficult trip than Mackenzie, when he wandered over the terrible desolation of the Barren Grounds, which lie under the Arctic circle. But no man had ever crossed or explored that part of the continent which the United States had just acquired; a part far better fitted to be the home of our stock than the regions to the north or south. It was the explorations of Lewis and Clark, and not those of Mac-

kenzie on the north or of the Spaniards in the south, which were to bear fruit, because they pointed the way to the tens of thousands of settlers who were to come after them, and who were to build thriving commonwealths in the lonely wilderness which they had traversed.

#### IV. IN THE GAME COUNTRY.

From the Little Missouri on to the head of the Missouri proper the explorers passed through a region where they saw few traces of Indians. It literally swarmed with game, for it was one of the finest hunting-grounds in all the world. It so continued for three quarters of a century. Until after 1880 the region around the Little Missouri was essentially unchanged from what it was in the days of Lewis and Clark; game swarmed, and the few white hunters and trappers who followed the buffalo, the elk and the beaver were still at times in conflict with hunting parties from various Indian tribes. While ranching in this region I myself killed every kind of game encountered by Lewis and Clark.

Once, on the return voyage, when Clark was descending the Yellowstone River, a vast herd of buffalo, swimming and wading, plowed its way across the stream where it was a mile broad,

in a column so thick that the explorers had to draw up on shore and wait for an hour, until it passed by, before continuing their journey. Two or three times the expedition was thus brought to a halt; and as the buffalo were so plentiful and so easy to kill, and as their flesh was very good, they were the mainstay for the explorers' table. Both going and returning this wonderful hunting country was a place of plenty. The party of course lived, almost exclusively on meat, and they needed much, for, when they could get it, they consumed either a buffalo, or an elk or a deer, or four deer, every day.

There was one kind of game which they at times found altogether too familiar. This was the grizzly bear, which they were the first white men to discover. They called it indifferently the grizzly, gray, brown, and even white bear, to distinguish it from its smaller, glossy, black-coated brother with which they were familiar in the Eastern woods. They found that the Indians greatly feared these bears, and after their first encounters they themselves treated them with much respect. The grizzly was then the burly lord of the Western prairie, dreaded by all other game, and usually shunned even by the Indians. In consequence it was very bold and savage.

Again and again these huge bears attacked the explorers of their own accord, when neither molested nor threatened. They galloped after the hunters when they met them on horseback even in the open; and they attacked them just as freely when they found them on foot. To go through the brush was dangerous; again and again one or another of the party was charged and forced to take to a tree, at the foot of which the bear sometimes mounted guard for hours before going off. When wounded the beasts fought with desperate courage, and showed astonishing tenacity of life, charging any number of assailants, and succumbing but slowly even to mortal wounds. In one case a bear that was on shore actually plunged into the water and swam out to attack one of the canoes as it passed. However, by this time all of the party had become good hunters, expert in the use of their rifles, and they killed great numbers of their ursine foes.

Nor were the bears their only brute enemies. The rattlesnakes were often troublesome. Unlike the bears, the wolves were generally timid, and preyed only on the swarming game; but one night a wolf crept into camp and seized a sleeper by the hand; when driven off he jumped upon another man, and was shot by a third. A less intentional assault was committed by a buffalo



The up-river men.

